



Nebraska

State
Rehabilitation
Council

*"A consumer-controlled council
committed to ensuring quality
rehabilitation services."*

*Annual Report
1998-1999*

December, 1999

*Nebraska State Board of Education
P.O. Box 94987
Lincoln, NE 68509*

To the Citizens of the State of Nebraska:

The Nebraska State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is pleased to present to you the 1999 Annual Report.

The SRC has continued to work closely with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) to improve and expand employment services for individuals with disabilities in Nebraska. The relationship between the SRC and VR continues to evolve and improve as we focus on the changes brought about by The Workforce Investment Act of 1998.

How do we best safeguard quality employment services for consumers as we move to the one-stop service centers required by this Act? We are especially concerned about consumers in Nebraska's vast rural areas and are determined to ensure that this new concept is an improvement for those consumers as they pursue their employment goals.

As recommended by the SRC, VR created a website for the council and made a link to that site from the VR website.

The SRC recommended that "homemaker" remain in the definition of Employment Outcome in the proposed Rule 72 revision. With that change in place, the SRC unanimously voted in support of the revised Rule 72.

The SRC feels strongly that the earlier VR interacts with families, the more successful students will be in entering and staying in the work force. Based on results from last year's transition survey, we recommended to VR that they:

- work more closely with high school staff to provide work experience for students in transition,*
- have VR staff work with parents and students to improve transition plans in students' Individualized Education Plans,*
- do a better job of getting information out to parents about VR's role in providing transition services, and*
- educate field staff on how to work more effectively with students diagnosed with behavior disorders and/or learning disabilities.*

The SRC and VR agreed that more direct communication with the family would help assure a more successful employment outcome for all consumers.

In partnership with Vocational Rehabilitation, the State Rehabilitation Council will continue to develop and review VR goals and assist in preparing VR's State Plan. Working together, the SRC and VR can improve the quality of life and economic security of people with disabilities in Nebraska.

Sincerely,

Sharon Bloechle

Sharon Bloechle, Chairperson

Overall function of State Rehab Council

Review, analyze, and advise **Vocational Rehabilitation** regarding their performance, including responsibilities relating to:

- ✓ eligibility (including order of selection);
- ✓ the extent, scope, and effectiveness of services provided; and
- ✓ functions performed by State agencies that affect or potentially affect the ability of individuals with disabilities in achieving employment outcomes.

In partnership with **Vocational Rehabilitation**, develop, agree to, and review State goals and priorities, and evaluate the effectiveness of the vocational rehabilitation program.

Assist in the preparation of the State plan and amendments to the plan, applications, reports, needs assessments, and evaluations.

To the extent feasible, conduct a review and analysis of the effectiveness of and consumer satisfaction with:

- ✓ functions performed by VR;
- ✓ vocational rehabilitation services provided by State agencies and other public and private entities responsible for providing vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities; and
- ✓ employment outcomes achieved by eligible individuals receiving services including the availability of health and other employment benefits in connection with such employment outcomes.

Prepare and submit an annual report to the State Department of Education on the status of vocational rehabilitation programs operated within the state, and make the report available to the public.

To avoid duplication of efforts and enhance the number of

Functions continued

individuals served, coordinate activities with the activities of other councils within the state.

Provide for the coordination and the establishment of working relationships between **Vocational Rehabilitation** and the Statewide Independent Living Council and Centers for Independent Living within the State.

Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation accomplishments during fiscal year 1999

During fiscal year 1999, Vocational Rehabilitation intensified efforts in the redesign of its service delivery system to meet the **2001 Vision** of 2,001 consumers successfully employed in FY2001. Accomplishing this goal would more than double the number of consumers employed in 2001 compared to 1996, the beginning year for this **Vision 2001** initiative. Although the number of successful closures reached 1,614 in 1999, the continuing strategy must be on redesign – working smarter, not just harder. The system must support 2,001 consumers successfully employed; with emphasis on better jobs, higher wages, health care benefits and increased career opportunities. The **Vision 2001** strategy will continue to focus on value added redesign – not on increased funding or more staff.

In 1999, Voc Rehab continued emphasizing community partnerships, defining more effective business processes, providing greater opportunity for informed consumer choice, increasing expectations of employment outcomes, and planning for emerging opportunities with the anticipated passage of workforce investment and Social Security work incentives legislation. The following areas received significant attention in the redesign in 1999:

Transition Vocational Rehabilitation continued its emphasis on transition planning and providing consultation with

Accomplishments continued

schools and parents for students with disabilities as young as age 14. Voc Rehab provided individual and group services in evaluation, independent living and vocational planning. They developed cooperative agreements with 13 school districts in northeast Nebraska, Lincoln public schools and Grand Island public schools. Some of these agreements emphasize working with students with behavior disorders and students with significant learning disabilities. Both of these groups drop out of school at a higher rate than other students with disabilities and experience higher arrest rates during the five year period following school.

Front End planning Voc Rehab conducted major restructuring on processes and services they provide at the “front end” of the system – from intake through agreement on the Individual Plan for Employment. The redesign will provide greater informed choice for consumers and increase employment rates. New features include an orientation to Vocational Rehabilitation, benefits counseling, focus on “futures planning” and a market driven approach to vocational planning.

Employment Teams During the year, significant progress was made in further restructuring and deploying services through employment teams of ten to 13 staff. Through shared decision making and mutual accountability within the team, this approach will provide a broad base of services to clients, utilize the unique strengths of team members, support major employer partnerships, and facilitate the long-term benefits of transition and employment warranty programs.

Team Services Defining the nature and scope of “team services” was essential to continued progress in developing employment teams. These services are contrasted with community services such as college training, and support

Accomplishments continued

services such as transportation, both of which are purchased in the community and not provided by staff. Voc Rehab identified 17 team services and 14 group services which are available for consumers individually or as a group, and for partnering organizations such as schools and employers. Committees were set up to begin structuring and documenting these team services to assure best practice delivery and uniformity throughout the state. The services are categorized within six team service categories: Assessment, life exploration and skill training, miscellaneous training, counseling, employment and rehabilitation technology.

Assistive Technology Voc Rehab intensified efforts to assure that assistive technology is used as needed for a wider range of disability groups. The Solutions-on-Site program with the Nebraska Assistive Technology Partnership was expanded to increase the number of consumers receiving employment-related assistive technology services and enhance staff and employer awareness of the employment related value of assistive technology.

Targeting Industries Voc Rehab expanded the Targeting Industries program this year to include additional Omaha employer partnerships such as ConAgra and InfoUSA. Apartment housing was included with the Marriott partnership to increase opportunities for consumers outside the Omaha area. A major agreement was set up with eight employers in western Nebraska that will open paid apprentice training that will result in full-time employment with good pay and health care benefits. The central Nebraska employment teams in Kearney, Hastings and Grand Island joined placement efforts to open better employment opportunities for consumers in the economic market of the tri-cities. Vocational Rehabilitation expanded their Targeting Industries program through involvement in local career

Accomplishments continued

fairs, employer advisory groups and employer recognition programs all hosted by local Voc Rehab employment teams.

Employment Warranty Work continued on the Employment Warranty program to help successful consumers maintain, regain or advance in employment. Because of the intensive tracking required for this program, the Employment Warranty program could not be realistically implemented until the new information system, QUEST, was developed. The Employment Warranty program will help support the 60 month employment focus of the Social Security Ticket to Work legislation.

Information System Development Major work was done in the development of Vocational Rehabilitation unified information system QUEST - **Q**uality **E**mployment **S**olutions through **T**eams. The system expands available client data to enhance decision making and informed choice. Important data categories were standardized, including functional capacities, standard occupational codes, industrial classifications and others. Standardizing with more universal nomenclature will facilitate data exchange with the anticipated workforce development system. QUEST links essential consumer service components of transition, intake, assessment, plan development, service delivery and placement and employment warranty.

QUEST has a unified accounting system that ties together client services, grants, contracts, personnel and administrative expenditure. The system also includes key subsystems such as an employee information subsystem, a grants and contracts subsystem, inventory, training and staff expense reimbursement subsystems. Although QUEST is not completed, initial training and conversion of consumer data have been completed with final development of the system expected by the third quarter.

State Rehabilitation Council Committee Reports

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee continued to ensure the State Rehabilitation Council's (SRC) direct involvement in developing Vocational Rehabilitation's (VR) State Plan goals and objectives by:

- ✓ having VR identify a specific topic related to goals and priorities to present at each SRC meeting for discussion and recommendations,
- ✓ encouraging SRC members to participate on VR committees formed periodically to explore current and future policy,
- ✓ having an SRC member represent the council at all Joint Agency Meetings held across the state to elicit public comment,
- ✓ receiving periodic progress reports for the Parent Training Center grant activities, the Assistive Technology Partnership and other VR projects.

In October, the Committee reviewed new SRC requirements outlined in the 1998 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to assure that the SRC is in complete compliance with the Act.

An Executive Committee member was assigned as a liaison to each of the other SRC committees to obtain a better idea of what each committee was working on and eliminate duplication.

The Executive Committee sought out and interviewed new members for the SRC, trying to ensure that all disability areas were represented on the council. A new streamlined training was set up for new members.

Committee Reports continued

At the end of the year, council members completed a survey evaluating the performance of the SRC during the past year. We were pleased that all members seemed fairly satisfied with the work the SRC is doing. We also received some suggestions about how the SRC might become even more effective, so this will be one of our goals for the coming year.

Looking ahead, we predict next year will probably be dominated by statewide changes resulting from the Workforce Investment Act. This Committee, and the SRC as a whole, will focus on ensuring that all Nebraskans with disabilities receive the employment services they need under this Act.

Legislative Committee

The role of the Legislative Committee is to 1) develop an on-going education process for policymakers on **V**ocational **R**ehabilitation; and 2) monitor and explore legislation and evaluate the impact it would have on rehabilitation services.

This year, the committee focused on monitoring bills, especially those connected with the budget of VR. The State Legislature appropriated the state dollars needed to match federal funds for the VR program. We supported the head injury bill and the disincentives or Medicaid Buy-In Bill. In addition to supporting this legislation, we monitored the progress and impact of the WIA (Workforce Investment Act).

We are concerned about the shared cost of the one-stop service centers that will be created by the WIA, so we'll continue to monitor this very closely. We also endorsed Frank Lloyd, VR Director, as the VR representative on the State Workforce Investment Council.

Committee Reports continued

The committee also encouraged each SRC member to become a member on the local workforce investment boards. In the upcoming year, the committee will continue to monitor legislation that may impact VR or persons with disabilities.

Interagency Outreach Committee

There were three areas the Interagency Outreach Committee continued to work on this past year; 1) Importance of communication between the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC), 2) Joint Agency Meeting (JAM), 3) enhancing inter-agency collaborative efforts.

The Interagency Outreach Committee continues to recognize the importance of communication between the SRC and the SILC. We have made an effort to communicate through reports from the SILC representative on the SRC, and plan to expand the communication by having the SILC minutes sent to all SRC members. This committee, along with the SRC, will continue to monitor our progress.

The SRC continues to be a part of the panel for the Joint Agency Meeting (JAM) on disabilities issues. The JAM involves representatives from several agencies coming together to address public concerns and questions about disability-related issues. This committee's responsibility includes identifying a member of the SRC to be part of the panel and provide reports back to the SRC. These continue to be held throughout the state at various times of the year.

This committee feels it is important for the SRC to receive information from agencies or programs that VR works with through a partnership or in conjunction with clients. This year the committee invited programs or agencies to provide information to the council about their program, share

Committee Reports continued

how they presently work with VR, how their program might affect clients of VR or how the working relationship with VR could be improved. The following agencies / programs provided presentations to the SRC: Workforce Investment Act, Nebraska Consortium for People with Disabilities, Nebraska Department of Education, Office of Special Populations, IDEA, Developmental Disabilities Council Legislative Update, Parent Information and Training Center, Transition Project and the Norfolk League of Human Dignity.

Client Service Delivery Committee

This committee explores how VR can improve the delivery of services to consumers and their satisfaction with those services. This past year, the committee evaluated and made recommendations to VR in the areas of transition, case planning, and consumer recruitment.

Last year, the committee surveyed parents and students involved in high school transition services. In reviewing survey results, it was clear that parents want to be included in the transition process. The committee recommended to VR that parents be provided more information about transition services. It further requested that parents be given an active part in the planning process. The committee also recommended that VR provide more work opportunities for transition students. Lastly, the committee recommended that VR become more knowledgeable about the needs of students with learning disabilities.

The Client Services Committee completed a review of unsuccessful case closures. The committee concluded that a majority of these cases were closed as a result of consumers not fully understanding the role of VR and their own responsibilities. Recommendations were made to the VR Front End Planning Committee to better address these

Committee Reports continued

issues in case planning and development.

The final issue the committee reviewed this year was the consumer recruitment process. The committee is concerned that consumers believe VR helps only those individuals with certain types of disabilities. It was felt some people who could benefit from services were staying away. Recommendations were made to VR to expand its outreach program.

The Client Services Delivery Committee plans to explore the relationship between Work Force Development and VR in the upcoming year.

Statistics

\$19,477,224

earned annually by those entering employment

\$857,916

annual decrease in public assistance payments

8,829

Nebraskans with disabilities received
vocational rehabilitation services

1,614

Nebraskans with disabilities
entered gainful employment

100%

are severely disabled

2,068

new eligible cases

Benefits

The average rehabilitated person returns \$12 to the tax payers for every \$1 spent on his or her rehabilitation.

This table shows the taxes and reduced public assistance in relation to the cost.

Average cost of vocational rehabilitation per person	-----	\$10,957
Annual Earnings following rehabilitation	-----	\$13,620
Estimated Annual Taxes on earnings:		
Federal Income Tax	-----	\$1,013
State Income Tax	-----	\$332
State/Local Sales Tax	-----	\$237
Social Security Tax	-----	\$2,111
Average Total Taxes per year	-----	\$3,692
Average Reduced Public Assistance for people successfully employed	-----	\$399
Total of Taxes + Reduced Public Assistance	---	\$4,292
Average return to the Tax Payers over 30 remaining years of employment		\$128,753

Employed individuals with disabilities pay taxes. They don't consume them.

State Rehabilitation Council Members 1999/2000

Bob Battreall
North Platte
Term Expires: Sept. 2000

Sharon Bloechle
Omaha
Term Expires: Sept. 2001

Lind Carey
Norfolk
Term Expires: Sept. 2001

Michelle Davis
Hastings
Term Expires: Sept. 2001

Alvin Fox
McCool Junction
Term Expires: Sept. 2000

Susan Gieschen
Ogallala
Term Expires: Sept. 2002

Josie Johnson
Lincoln
Term Expires: Sept. 2000

Tim Kolb
Franklin
Term Expires: Sept. 2002

*Frank Lloyd, VR Director
Lincoln
Term: On-going

Mitch Miller
Lincoln
Term Expires: Sept. 2001

Kris Nolan Brown
Grand Island
Term Expires: Sept. 2001

Judy Ortmeier
Lincoln
Term Expires: Sept. 2002

Colleen Peterson
Omaha
Term Expires: Sept. 2000

Vicki Rasmussen
Lincoln
Term: On-going

Jack Shepard
Hastings
Term Expires: Sept. 2001

Dave Temple
Lincoln
Term Expires: Sept. 2001

Fred Uehling
Omaha
Term Expires: Sept. 2000

Merwyn Vavrina
Lincoln
Term Expires: Sept. 2000

Joleen Zabawa
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